

HONG NGU

Hong Ngu, the capital of the northern-most district in Kien Phong Province, is located on the Mekong River, 4 miles south of the Cambodian border. Most of the province's population and its rice fields are strung in a narrow strip along the bank of the Mekong. Marshy areas, which occupy most of the remainder of the province, extend eastward through the adjoining province of Kien Tuong, forming the extensive, almost unpopulated Plain of Reeds (see Sketch Map and 1:100,000 map). The Communists have used this latter areas as a sanctuary and/or infiltration route for years. Similarly, the Cambodian border areas to the north and northwest of Hong Ngu serve as base areas for the Communists and as sites for infiltration routes. Hong Ngu itself and the immediately adjacent areas, however, remain under ARVN control although the town was subjected to rocket attacks as recent as January 1973.

Hong Ngu's location on the Mekong River and near the Cambodian border has provided natural advantages for its development as a market center for trade between the Vietnamese and the Cambodians. Additionally, considerable smuggling takes place, with livestock and cigarettes from Cambodia traded for gasoline and medicine from South Vietnam. Commodities such as pork, duck, rice, and various vegetables and fruits should be available locally throughout much of the year.

Boats provide the best surface transportation in the Mekong Delta; they range in size from ocean-going freighters, which traverse the Mekong

to Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to the many small types used locally by the peasants. Hong Ngu is linked to the province capital, Cao Lanh, and other cities of the delta by the Mekong and its distributaries as well as the extensive system of canals that form the "streets and avenues" of the delta. (Many of the canals may be unnavigable, however, as a result of silting and lack of dredging during the years of fighting.) Hong Ngu's proximity to Tan Chau, a principal ship convoy assembly point, assures potential passengers of relatively frequent downstream passage.

A natural surface road, Route LTL 30, extends from Hong Ngu to Cao Lanh. The route is "potholed" in some sections and may be impassable in places due to flooding during most of the rainy season, at least during the months July through November. (Jeeps, light trucks, and lambrettas are the vehicles most suited for use on LTL 30 and other routes in this part of the delta.) The 90-mile trip to Saigon, made by crossing and recrossing the Mekong, takes about 6 hours if all road sections are passable, and with luck in catching ferries.

No serviceable airstrips, usable by cargo planes, are located at or near Hong Ngu. The airstrip at An Long, 8 miles south of Hong Ngu, was not usable in 1972, but probably only minimum effort is needed to make it serviceable for C-123's. A heliport is located at Hong Ngu; others exist at such larger delta towns as Long Xuyen, Chau Phu, Can Tho, and Sa Dec and provide the fastest and most efficient means of resupply in this part of the delta (see 1:250,000 map and photo for heliport at Chau Doc).

The terrain around Hong Ngu is almost uniformly flat -- a characteristic of the entire Mekong Delta. Most of the area is at an elevation of 10 feet or less, and almost all of it is subject to flooding during the rainy season. Hong Ngu and Route LTL 30 are aligned along the highest ground of the natural levee, close to the river where inundation is relatively minimal. Rice paddies, at generally lower elevations, extend inland for several miles from the higher ground of the levee. Ground observation of movement through the paddies, particularly during the dry season (December - April) when the fields are barren, should be effective from the higher elevation of the levee.

The vast marshy area of the Plain of Reeds has offered concealment to the Communists since the days of their conflict with the French. Ground observation of movement in the tall, dense-growing reeds is impossible and detection from the air difficult. Other areas used by the Communists include a tract of marshlands (penetrable only by sampan) directly north of Hong Ngu astride the Cambodian border, and an area of forest and marsh, northwest of Hong Ngu, that extends into Cambodia. The latter is considered a Communist base area and has been bombed extensively. Movement in both areas would be difficult to detect.

The rainy season begins in May or early June in the Hong Ngu area and continues into November. Normally, by mid-July the delta is flooded and ground travel, other than by boat, is extremely difficult throughout the area. Rains during the monsoon season generally last

from a half hour to 2 or 3 hours and are not necessarily restricted to the afternoon hours. On occasion, the rain may last through the night. Occasionally, turbulence is so severe in the storm cells that helicopters temporarily are prevented from landing. Temperatures during the rainy season average in the low 80's with high relative humidity. Fog and low clouds typically shroud Hong Ngu during the morning hours of the wet season, but burn off after sunrise.

During the dry season the paddy fields are dry and parched, and movement on foot through the area is relatively easy. Dry season temperatures climb into the low 90's; an occasional brief thunder-shower may provide a temporary respite from the heat.

Hoa Hao (a reformed Buddhist sect) adherents form a large part of the population of Kien Phong Province. Liaison with local government officials probably would entail contact with Hoa Hao members as many district and provincial posts in Kien Phong are staffed by the Hoa Hao. As they have been generally less receptive to Communist subversion than most Vietnamese Buddhists in spite of longstanding Viet Cong suggestions of "accommodation," the Vietnamese government has cultivated their support. Sect leaders have been appointed to district and provincial posts in provinces where their adherents predominate.

No current information is available concerning mined or booby-trapped areas in the vicinity of Hong Ngu. The ARVN troops in the Hong Ngu area must have made protective anti-personnel and anti-tank "plantings," however, in the perimeter area of the town.

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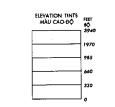
Chau Doc. A typical delta town near Hong Ngu.



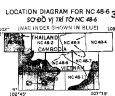
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SERIES 1501 AIR
SHEET NC 486
EDITION 3

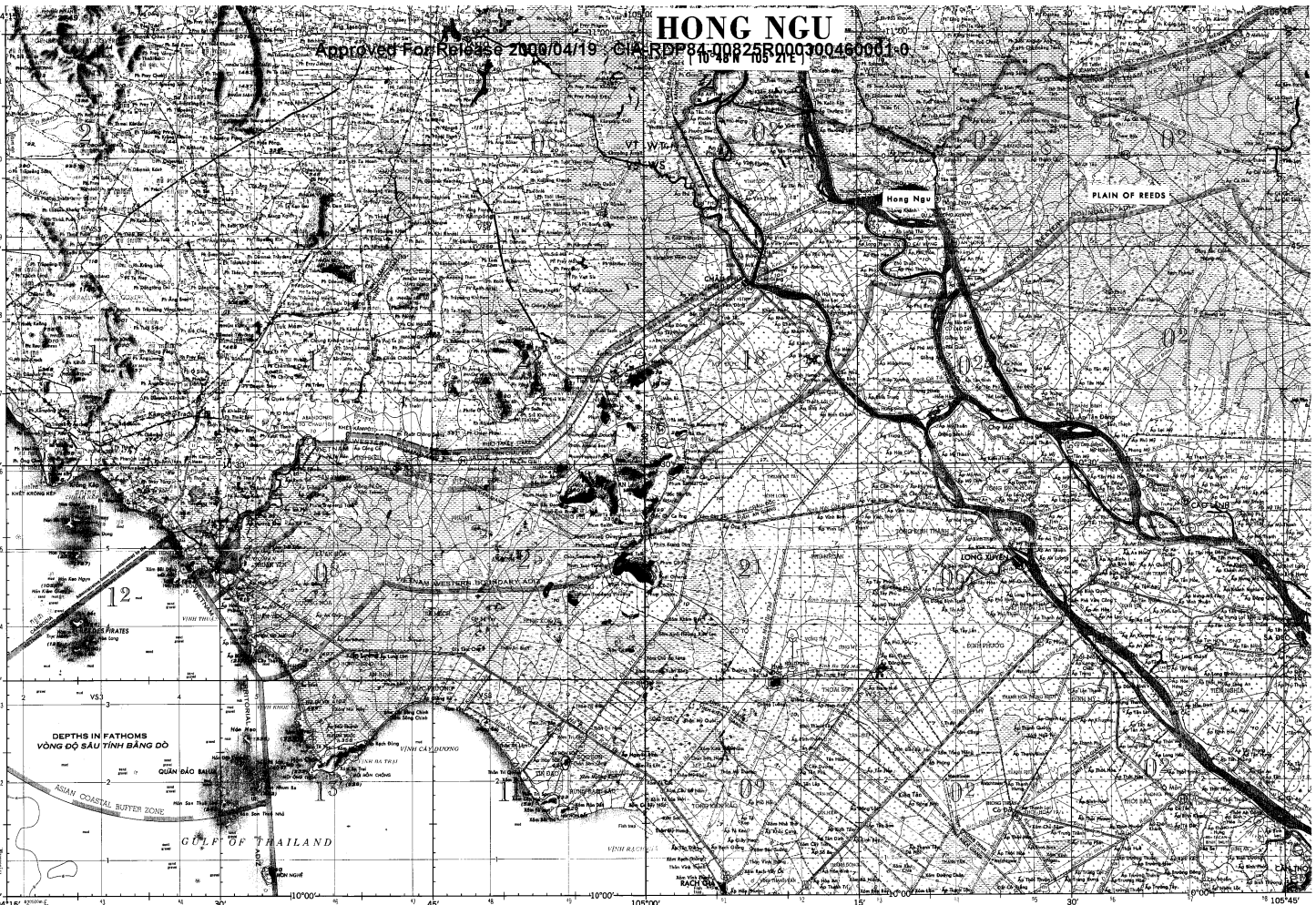


RELIABILITY OF THIS MAP
SOURCE: U.S. NAVY CHIEF OF NAUTICS
DATE: 1965
REVISION: 1965
CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED



GLOSSARY
A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. J. K. L. M. N. O. P. Q. R. S. T. U. V. W. X. Y. Z.
ASIAN COASTAL BUFFER ZONE
CAUTION
DO NOT SCALE DISTANCES FROM THIS MAP

SCALE 1:250,000
LONG XUYEN, VIETNAM
SERIES 1501 AIR
SHEET NC 486
EDITION 3



JOINT OPERATIONS GRAPHIC (AIR)

Scale 1:250,000

CONTOUR INTERVAL APPROXIMATELY 330 FEET WITH SUPPLEMENTARY CONTOURS AT 100 FOOT INTERVALS

HOANG CAO DU VONG CAO DO HONG CHONG DO DO

TRANSVERSE MERCATOR PROJECTION

HỆ THỐNG CHẾ UTM

CONTROLED AIRWAYS

VISUAL AIDS AND OBSTRUCTIONS

VIETNAM AIDS

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